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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature suggests that African-American and minority students bring a diverse culture to "traditional" college life. As a result, many institutions of higher learning have designed their student services, student-support programs, curricular, and extracurricular to meet the special nature and needs of its nontraditional students. An effective means of addressing minority student needs is to study the psychosocial factors related to their development. Those responsible for teaching and helping black students must create models of human and student development that take into account the unique needs and experiences that black students bring to the campus. Many "traditional" models fail to define factors that promote the black students' overall psychosocial development. Many adult development theories fail to acknowledge the cultural-race aspect of development. This study summarizes and discusses the conceptualized theories that are pertinent to the psychosocial development of culturally black adult students. The research studies of Gooden, Murray, Branch-Simpson, Clay, Jeffries, Ruffin, Bowman, Herbert, Simmons, Harris, McCrawley and Freeman, Littleton, and Jones are reviewed. These researchers have studied the issues and factors of psychosocial development among black adults and provided alternative models and theories addressing the development needs of black college students. (Contains 43 references.) (Author/EMK)

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An Overview of Black Adult Development Theories

by

Roosevelt Littleton, Jr., Ed.D.
Jackson State University

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ABSTRACT

AN OVERVIEW OF BLACK ADULT DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

BY

ROOSEVELT LITTLETON, JR., ED.D.

A review of the literature suggests that African-American and minority students bring a diverse culture to "traditional" college life. As a result, many institutions of higher learning have designed their student services, student-support programs, curricular and extracurricular to meet the special nature and needs of its nontraditional students. An effective means of addressing minority student needs is to study the psychosocial factors related to their development.

Those responsible for teaching and helping Black students must create models of human and student development that take into account the unique needs and experiences that Black students bring to the campus. Many "traditional" models failed to define factors that promote the Black students' overall psychosocial development. Many adult development theories failed to acknowledge the cultural-race aspect of development.

This study attempts to summarize and discuss the conceptualized theories that are pertinent to the psychosocial development of culturally Black adult students. The research studies of Gooden, Murray, Branch-Simpson, Clay, Jeffries, Ruffin, Bowman, Herbert, Simmons, Harris, McCrawley & Freeman, Littleton, and Jones have researched the issues and factors of psychosocial development among Black adults. Their research efforts have provided alternative models and theories for addressing the development needs of Black College students. (Contains 43 references)

Please address all correspondence to **Dr. Roosevelt Littleton, Jr.**
3630 Cromwell Street
Jackson, MS 39213-8224
(Tel.) 601-978-3450
E-mail: rooseveltl @hotmail . com

An Overview of Black Adult Development Theories

Introduction

African-American students at many colleges are heterogeneous and diverse due to demographic, social and technological changes (Blackwell, 1981). Their needs cover a wide range as a result of the diversity. Black adult development is extremely important because of the student constituency served. Student development theories, student-support programs, curricular and extracurricular, should be designed to meet the special needs of nontraditional groups (Hughes, 1982 and Schlossberg et al., 1989). A review of current literature suggests that the majority of African-American adult development literature centers on (a) racial awareness or racial identity development; (b) career choices and decidedness; and most importantly (c) academic and social development (Cheatham et al., 1990). These factors, crucial for psychosocial development, provide a means for studying the development of African-American adult students.

Chickering and Associates (1981) noted that every college and university in the country (whether public or private, 2-year or 4-year, or graduate) are in the business of shaping lives, lives that reflect much more than academic learning. Those responsible for teaching and helping Black students must create models of human and student development that take into account the unique needs and experiences that Black students bring to

the college campus. Issues specific to the African-American Adult development that were not inclusive in the traditional Adult development theories include:

> a) the unique psycho-history of Blacks in this country and the adaptations that Blacks must make; (b) the "colonized" nature of Black existence in this country; (c) the extended nature of the Black family and Black homelife; (d) the unique educational/socialization role of the Black family; (e) the oral tradition within the Black community; (f) the impact of racial hostility and environmental press; (g) the unique character of Black Americans; (h) the psychological dynamics that accompany being "a caste-like minority" representing a "rejected strain" in society, being "codified", and attempting to reconcile two identities; and (I) the philosophical connections to African tradition, action/belief connection, elastic concept of time, kinship tradition/group consciousness, survival focus (collective versus individual), spiritual disposition, and view of people as an integrated whole (McEwen, Roper, Bryan, and Langa, 1990, p.430).

While different in form and content, traditional development theories have stressed the sense of change and adaptation over the adult years. Chickering (1981) and D. Heath (1968) represent those who have

advanced their theories on "traditional" students. The recent collection of adult development theories were led by Levinson et al. (1978), Gould (1972, 1975), Riegel (1975), Valliant (1977), Sheehy (1976), and Neugarten (1968).. Erikson is considered the unquestionable innovator of the field.

In contrast to theorists who proposed the utilization of "traditional" models of psychosocial development, nontraditional theorists (Gooden, 1980; Murray, 1982; Branch-Simpson, 1985; Clay, 1985; Jeffries, 1985; Ruffin, 1985; Bowman, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Simmons, 1990; Harris, 1992; Crawley and Freeman, 1993; Littleton, 1994; and Jones, 1996) suggested the conceptualization of different models to identify the unique characteristics of psychosocial development for culturally diverse Black Adults. Although a number of "nontraditional" theorists proposed cultural-centric theories, several have incorporated segments of various "traditional" theory models. The following section discusses and reviews nontraditional theories of Black Adult psychosocial development.

Black Male Adult Development

Bowman's (1989) research concluded that men of all cultures progress through four sequential stages of adult development: (a) Pre-Adult Years/Identity; (b) Early Adulthood/Intimacy; (c) Middle Adulthood;Generativity; and (d) Old Age/Ego-Integrity. Although Bowman's theory aligned with Erikson's last four life stages, he suggested

that life span approach for Black men must go beyond existing life span paradigms. Healthy development necessitates the resolution of the pivotal developmental tasks related to salient role strains (Crawley and Freeman, 19930.

Bowman (1989) maintained that Black men face setting salient role performance goals, pressing role barriers and critical role conflicts at each stage of adult development. a perceived "gap" between salient goals and pressing barriers in a major life role may produce a critical intra-role conflict during each adult stage of development (p.126). Bowman (1985) utilized a national study of Black husbands and fathers to conceptualize the "role strain-adaption" theory.

The primary focus of Bowman's research examined the effects of racism on the Black male's adult development. Bowman (1989) identified distinct role strains as objective difficulties, or subjective reactions to such difficulties, faced by people as they engage in valued social roles. According to Bowman (1989), role strains could be produced by barriers in the social envirc nment, by personal limitations or by conflicts at the enivornment-person interface. The manner in which role difficulties are perceived, interpreted and evaluated may largely distinguish maladaptive from adaptive behavior responses.

As Black men transcend from adolescence to old age, a succession of conflicts in major life roles can cause an array of psychosocial development

disturbances (Bowman, 1989). Each of the stage-specific psychosocial problems (structural strategies, self-protective mechanism and clinical symptomatology) must be resolved before development advances. Bowman (1989) posited:

> Black males may be pronged toward particular modes of coping with structural role barriers during different adult periods. Rebellion, innovation, and retreatism appear to predominate during the pre, early and middle adult years, respectively. At each adult stage, structural role barriers may frustrate adaptive coping efforts and seriously threaten self-esteem. Self-protective mechanisms may also help Black males to manage stress better during each stage. However, if intense role conflict produces unmanageable distress, maladaptive response patterns may include more severe systematology (p.135).

In general, Bowman's (1989) model identified distinct role strains and adaptive issues which the Black man confronts at each stage of adult development. The role strain analysis processes reflect successive shifts in salient goals, oppressive role barriers and critical coping tasks across the adult life span. That process is later followed by an analysis of two distinct role-adaptive processes—pathology and ethnicity (p.126). Bowman suggested the stage of pathology to examine the model shifts in maladaptive responses to the Black male's critical role conflicts during each stage of adult

development. In addition, examining ethnicity was suggested for identifying the cultural patterns which serve as resources in promoting healthier psychosocial development.

Crawley and Freeman's (1993) research suggested a proactive positive analysis of the life themes and views of younger and older Black men. The researchers suggested that development of African-American men took place within the complex bicultural world of: (a) the rich and nurturing socio-eco-politicio-cultural context of the African-American experience and (b) pro Eurocentric socialization messages which translate as "anti-Black". According to Crawley and Freeman, the bicultural forces required a multifaceted rather than a unitary frame of reference to elucidate the unique milieu of which African-Americans develop and value a broad array of life views and themes. Those multifaceted references consisted of psychosocial concepts, bicultural socialization factors and the Afrocentric paradigm.

While Crawley and Freeman's (1993) theory favored the usage of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, the theorists suggested modifications were needed as they were applied to African-American males. "It must be recognized that significant aspects of these men's life experience have not been captured in the major theoretical paradigms of development and socialization used for the majority population" (p.16). As a result, modifications which reflect the effects of racial oppression and environment

hostility were integrated in Crawley and Freeman's theory of Adult psychosocial development.

Crawley and Freeman suggested the utilization of De Anda's (1984) cultural deficit and cultural differences models for understanding the bicultural socialization forces. The cultural deficit model assessed the assumption of cultural homogeneity as the norm. Violation of these cultural (Eurocentric) norms were viewed as resulting from deficiencies in violators (cultural diverse populations) and their cultural life styles. The cultural differences model focuses on the uniqueness of minority populations. Specifically, the cultural difference model allowed for the explication of salient factors relevant to the bicultural socialization experience of Black people (Afrocentricity) within American society.

Afrocentricity was suggested as an appropriate intervention paradigm for African-American men. Crawley and Freeman noted that the value of Afrocentricity theory was its ability to facilitate a more holistic and healthy perspective for understanding African-American aspirations, strengths, and potential. Asante (1989) noted, "It is through the centering of one's self analysis and perceptions from the groundness of the African person that African-Americans develop healthy perspectives on one's self identity."

In conclusion, Crawley and Freeman's (1993) theory was based on three developmental and socialization areas: enhanced psychosocial concepts, bicultural factors, and the Afrocentric paradigm. Crawley and

Freeman assessed that Black men faced certain psychosocial developmental tasks throughout their socialization and that the bicultural content was the milieu wherein those tasks will be accomplished. The Afrocentric cultural ideology was considered the foundation through which Black men developed and socialization occurred. Specifically, the Afrocentric foundation served as a task for a more realistic conceptualization of African-American psychosocial development.

Herbert's (1989) research was based on the psychosocial theory of Levinson and Associates (1978). The focus of Herbert's research sought to contribute a Black perspective to the theory of adult psychosocial development and to investigate the effects of racism on the developmental stages of Black businessmen. Specifically, Herbert's reserach focused on the first four developmental periods of early adulthood: The Early Adult Transition (EAT); the Entry Lift Structure (ELS); the Age Thirty Transition (ATT); and the Culminating Life Structure (CLS). The sample of 10 Black male entrepreneurs included men from 35 to 50 years of age, lower working class to upper middle class, high school drop-outs to holders of MBAs and other advanced graduate degrees, and in business varying from retail sales to manufacturing jobs. The theorist used a clinical/biographical interview method.

Herbert's findings concluded that formation of a satisfactory early adult life structure was a complex and difficult task for African-American

men. These difficulties were attributed to the racial discrimination, racial prejudice, and racism experiences at the individual, institutioanl and cultural levels. Herbert (1990) stated:

> Blacks are continually faced with a double message. They are capable, able to learn, competent and high achievers. In turn, they are discriminated against, faced with adversities, denied advancement opportunities based on merit, offered fewer rewards and promotions, excluded from societal affirmation, and in other ways made aware that the barriers precluding their success are extremely potent and costly. We have seen that living out one's adulthood under such conditions is extremely difficult. Current forms of racial discrimination and racism, arising out of a national history of slavery, are barriers not only to Black male achievement, but also to Black male psychosocial development. Of all factors (economic, social, class, race and so forth) associated with the many barriers facing Black men in America, those associated with race are most persuasive (p.441).

During the Early Adult Transition (EAT), the Black businessman began developing the primary tasks of: separating from their families, forming an adult identity, forming a dream, forming significant love relationships, and forming an occupation or career. Herbert (1989) noted that the formation of an initial adult identity was a complex task. It involved the

conscious and unconscious integration of racism into their racial and adult identity. During the Entry Life Structure (ELS), the Black businessmen began to explore new ways to live out their dreams and to express their individuality. These methods included pursuing a career, entering college, forming an independent home base, and initiating intimate relations.

The Age Thirty Transition (ATT) was a period where the businessmen experienced moderate and severe crises. During this period, it was common for Black men to express dissatisfaction with marital or love relationships (Intimacy), family matters, career, or employment status (p.439). The Black entrepreneurs used the Culminating Life Structure (CLS) period to review their previous dreams and ambitions and to identify long term goals for the future.

In summary, Herbert (1989) found Levinson's concepts of life structure and developmental age periods to be applicable in measuring Black adult psychosocial development. The developmental issues of occupation, marriage, family and dreams were examined and found relevant. The impact of racism was found to be persuasive, as a majority of the Black businessmen reported the development of a racial identity in each structure as a major concern. Herbert's research suggested the inclusion of two additional interdependent developmental tasks to Levinson's et al. (1978) theory. The tasks included (a) the formation of an explicitly individual racial identity that both acknowledges and free the individual of racism and

prejudices, and (b) the formation of an individual self-concept dedicated to the eradication and abolition of racism.

Jones (1996) sought to research an Africentric theoretically-based, multiple-case study of five successful African American male entrepreneurs. The primary objectives were to contribute an Africentric theoretical formulation of adult psychosocial development; to investigate African American racial/ethnic identity development; to examine what proactive coping strategies were used to control racism; and, to probe major concepts of Levinson's theory of adult psychosocial development.

Jones (1996) discovered that an Africentric theoretical perspective could be implemented in the conceptualization of adult psychosocial development and positive racial/ethnic identity development. Jones (1996) concluded that positive racial/ethnic identity was initially stimulated by early childhood psychosocial factors (e.g., family, community, school), and this identity would continue to develop throughout later life as a result of ensuing psychosocial experiences. African American racial/ethnic identity was found to be comprised of positive, negative, and ambiguous attributes existing within a phenomenal plane. The disparities between these attributes had to be resolved in order to develop a positive proactive identity.

Further Jones (1996) opined that racism continuously impinged upon the lives of Black men, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Subsequently, two racial/ethnic identity developmental tasks were proposed:

(1) the internal resolution of racial/ethnic identity that transcends negative stereotypes about African Americans; and (2) the incorporation of a proactive self-concept dedicated to the eradication of racism.

Based on the role that racial/ethnic identity played in making their life choices, four types of proactive coping styles used by the participants to neutralize racism were identified: (1) central theme for all life choices; (2) organizing theme for some life choices; (3) background theme for various life choices; and (4) neutral predisposition for life choices. These acknowledged proactive coping styles were unique cognitive processes employed by each participant in his perceptions of self-sufficiency, self-concept, racial/ethnic identity, racism, and socioeconomic competitiveness. Jones (1996) concluded that the future inclusion of an Africentric theoretically-based research model was warranted in the theoretical formulation of adult psychosocial development.

Gooden's (1980) study described the developmental stages of Black males in their early adult years, from adolescence to midlife transition. Particular attention was focused on the formation and development of elements of the life structure such as dreams, mentor relationships, marriage or family and occupation. The study takes Levinson et al. 's (1978) approach that sees adult development as the evolution of a life structure through successive age-linked periods, alternately structure building and transitional,

each having a set of tasks which are critical to development during that period.

Gooden's (1980) research sought to explore several theories: (1) Does Levinson's age-linked periods hold for Blacks? (2) Are specific concepts such as the Dream, Mentors, and Becoming Ones Own Man relevant or applicable to these Black men? (3) What are the differences between the three socio-economic groups in the sample in terms of adult development? and (4) How do ethnic issues interact with developmental tasks and how do these Black men deal with such issues?

Gooden's study sample consisted of 15 Black men between the ages of 40 and 53. An open-ended, non-schedule style was used. Interviews were recorded and later biographical interviews were developed from the recordings. The sequence of age linked periods found by Levinson et al. (1978) in his predominantly white male sample appeared also in the lives of the Black participants with some variation in age. Only a few of the men formed dreams in their late teens or twenties. Most of the men who formed dreams were unable to integrate these dreams into their lives and gave up their dreams. Gooden's research suggested that very few men had mentors and so were deprived of their help in forming occupations and making real their dreams.

Gooden (1980) concluded that the majority of the men had difficulties in their late thirties achieving advancement and affirmation. He states,

"This difficulty as well as the lack of mentoring seems related to a theme of deprivation that is part of being Black in the U.S. Several men felt their lives were limited because they were Black."

Gooden found the "seasons" theory quite useful in approaching the broad and difficult topic of adult development of Black men. The Season Theory envokes a retrospective look at the early adult years of the participants and gain some understanding of the process by which they moved from childhood and adolescence into early adulthood.

The purpose of Murray's (1982) study was to provide information about the mid-life experiences and adult development of Black males. Murray's (1982) study addressed three questions: (1) What are the major concerns of middle class Black men at mid-life? (2) What impact has racism had on Black men's lives and their adult development? (3) How applicable are the current theories of adult development to Black men?

Murray's research sample consisted of 100 middle class Black men between the ages of 35 and 45. The study utilized surveys and intensive interviews as data sources. The findings of Murray's study concluded that this was a successful group of Black men who had stable careers and family relationships. The men's lives evolved through similar age-linked periods as Levinson et al.'s (1978) sample of predominantly white men.

The majority of the men reported having dreams that were vague and focused on family and financial security. A little over half of them reported

having mentor relationships. Men with mentors, regardless of the mentor's race, reported being dissatisfied with their career advancements significantly more often than men who did not have mentors. Men who reported positive racial experiences reported having better relationships with their children and rated their sexual performance as good significantly more often than men with negative racial themes.

Murray employed the theories of Vaillant (1977), Gould (1975) and Levinson et al. (1978) as theory bases for researching the adult development of this population. Murray's (1982) study found various aspects to be applicable to isolated concepts in the theories of Valliant, Gould and Levinson. In particular, Murray's results validated Gould's finding that men in mid-life are overly concerned about death and their physical decline.

Black Female Adult Development

Jeffries (1985) exploratory study objectives were to examine the psychosocial development phases of Black women and to determine which phases were uniquely associated with Black female development. The work of Levinson et al. (1978) provided the conceptual framework for investigating the Black female sample. The sample consisted of 40 Black women who ranged from 20 to 40 years of age. Specifically, Jeffries sought to develop a culture-specific theoretical base on which mental health

professionals and others could structure intervention strategies for Black women.

Jeffries (1985) found that age was not significantly related to psychosocial development among Black females. However, the study did show the existence of four phases that were culture-specific in nature and typically related to Black female development. Phase I was considered the core stage for basic personality development. Jeffries (1985) assessed that the difficulty of this period was to resolve the identity crises of youth and to acquire a primary concept of self-worth.

Jeffries contended that in Phase II the Black female appeared to spend a period resolving unrealistic (Eurocentric) values and adapting to the realities of Black lifestyles. Specifically, the primary tasks of Phase II focused on the universal issues of: (a) assessment of educational/career options; (b) assessment of interpersonal relationships including intimate, marital and family options; and (c) formation of initial life scripts reflecting individual and group identities (p.165). Phase III described a period of challenge and change in which the Black female questions and reorganizes her decision-making skills for competence and effectiveness. According to Jeffries, women who fail to adapt to changing environmental conditions succumb to the maladaptive effects of depression, anxiety, or submission.

The final step of Jeffries' Black female adult development theory was Phase IV. The most notable aspect of Phase IV was the Black female's

tendency to compromise and to reconcile the life issues of the mental, physical, and emotional well-being. As a result, life issues are placed into perspective and resolved accordingly.

In summary, Jeffries' research findings suggested that race and age were not significantly related to Black female development. However, the findings did support the point that psychosocial development was culture-specific among Black women. Further, conflicting and negative messages conveyed during the female's adolescent and young adult years may transcend into negative effects during the adult development processes.

Ruffin (1985), Harris (1992) and Simmons (1990) conducted exploratory studies to generate hypotheses regarding the psychosocial development of Black women. The framework of Ruffin's study was based on the theoretical concepts of Levinson and Associates (1978). Ruffin sought to explore the relationship between age-related developmental change and an evolving racial identity.

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) was utilized by Ruffin to survey a sample of eight Black professional and business women. In addition, each subject participated in a ten-hour life history interview. Ruffin's research results supported Levinson's propostion that developmental change is expressed through changes in life structure (e.g., career, love, relationships, marriage, and family relationships).

Harris' (1992) study proposed utilization of an Afrocentric model for assessing the growth and development of the African American woman. Harris' (1992) model was consistent with the Black woman's culture, history and tradition. Specifically, Harris' model addressed psychosocial issues related to childhood experiences, identity development, interpersonal relationships, and racism. These issues were examined by exploring three areas of the Black woman's development: a sense of identity; a sense of belonging; and a sense of control.

Harris' (1992) study focused on obtaining clinical and non-clinical development information on the African-American female population. Specifically, Harris sought to provide a developmental approach to explore and describe the types of experiences of adolescent and young Black adult females (p. 160). The data came from 54 taped interviews and questionnaires with Black women from a rural area. The population consisted of two samples. One group consisted of Black female college students aged 19 to 25 years, and another group consisted of teenage Black females aged 14 to 17 years.

Harris' (1992) findings suggested the following: (1) the female respondent's sense of connection was not only a sense of belonging to the family and community but also incorporated a sense of spirituality; (2) there maybe problems with the Black woman's perceptions of the Black man—ninety-six percent (96%) of the study's sample adolescents described males

with negative comments that implied a sense of distrust, dishonesty and harm; and (3) an emphasis on ethnic pride and self development were suggested as tools for confronting racism.

Harris (1992) concluded: examining three areas of an individual's life: a sense of belonging; identity; and control; provides the structure for self-exploration. From the assessment of these areas, specific counseling goals to foster an understanding of these experiences can be developed. Using the assessment model for identifying areas of concern and developing goals for counseling will result in effective and relevant mental health services (p.106).

Simmons' (1990) study was based on a theoretical perspective on life-span human development that explored the entire life cycle by looking at normative, non-normative, and socio-cultural-historical influences. The subjects of this study were eight African-American women between the ages of 65 and 74 who were selected through a network approach in the community. The subjects participated in a series of intensive biographical interviews that explored their entire life-span. The life histories of the subjects were presented descriptively, utilizing the life experiences of Black women.

Simmons' (1990) study suggested that coping with a life of adversity was a common developmental theme. Simmons' study noted the importance of four developmental themes that were vital to the female

development. Those developmental themes included: (a) having a strong religious belief throughout life; (b) belonging to and/or creating a family network; (c) having a view of oneself as a survivor; and (d) having values to live by. Three additional developmental themes were identified for half the subjects in this study: (a) relationships with significant non-kin others; (b) obtaining an advanced education; and (c) having a career (Simmons, 1990, p.144). Simmons' (1990) study attempted to lay ground work for building a psychosocial theory of elderly African-American women.

Group - Black Adult Development

Branch-Simpson (1985), Clay (1985) and Littleton (1994) conducted an exploratory study which sought to collect information toward the formation of a Black student developmental theory. Using Chickering's and Erikson's theory of development as a framework, the researchers compared the degree to which Black students' psychosocial development were similar. In addition, the researchers sought to describe the tasks and patterns of Black student development as reported by the subjects.

Branch-Simpson (1985) employed the phenomenological approach to interview a sample of forty Black college students (twenty males and twenty females). The findings of the study suggested that many of the students' task of development corresponded with Chickering's vectors of development. Those areas included: Competence, Autonomy, Intimacy, Values, Identity

Formation, and Ways of Knowing. Branch-Simpson (1985) regarded Chickering's theory of development to be applicable in measuring Black college students (young adults) development. The developmental vectors of Competence, Autonomy and Intimacy were studies and found similar to Chickering's. However, the findings suggested that religion and spirituality were prominent in the developmental process of Black college students. In addition, men were expected to be more instrumental and career-achievement oriented than women. Futher, the data suggested that closeness with family and interpersonal relationships were significant factors in the psychosocial development of Black college students.

The purpose of Clay's (1985) research was to determine if there exists among Black middle class adults age-linked, psychosocial stages of development which could be characterized by changes in their attitudes and perceptions of themselves to ascertain the developmental issues and sequences of various cultural subgroups in the society. Clay's (1985) study was designed to test the applicability of one stage model of adult development on the Black middle class.

Specifically, the objectives of Clay's (1985) cross-sectional study were to examine the psychosocial developmental phases of middle class African American adults and to determine whether those phases and their concomitant themes were identical for men and women in the sample. The work of Roger Gould provided the conceptual and methodological bases for

the study thereby allowing an investigation of the applicability of the Gould model of adult development to a Black middle class population. It was hypothesized that there were no significant relationships between age, sex, or age in conjunction with sex and the subjects' attitudes and perceptions of themselves, relationships with others and life experiences. The sample consisted of 240 Black middle class adults between the ages of 17 and 76. From an analysis of rankings of questionnaire items by age, the following nine age groups were identified: 29-33, 34-38, 39-43, 44-50, 51-58, and 59 and above.

A second objective of the study was to examine whether these stages and their concomitant themes were identical for middle class African American men and women. Clay (1985) investigated the generalizability of the Gould model of adult development to a Black American middle class population. Clay's (1985) research attempted to generate implications for counseling Black adults from a developmental perspective.

In Clay's (1985) research, the attitudes and perceptions of one segment of the Black American population were investigated. Intragroup differences based on age and sex, as well as continuities across age and gender groups were found. Although Black people were studied independently in this work, Clay (1985) concluded from the results that there are differences and similarities between the psychosocial development of Black middle class adults and that of white middle class adults. However, unlike in traditional

research on Black people this study was not based on a cultural deviance model, therefore, the differences found have not been interpreted as deficits.

The Gould model of adult development was found applicable for a Black middle class population. Clay's (1985) study demonstrates that African American adults continue to change throughout adulthood and that many of these changes occur in sequential phases. Clay's (1985) study is significant in that it examines Black adult self-esteem from a developmental perspective suggesting that there are changes in self-regard that are related to time and circumstances.

Littleton's (1994) study sought to determine if Black doctoral students resolve various developmental tasks during designated stages of the life cycle based on their demographic differences (gender, age, marital status, and enrollment status) as suggested by Erikson. Erik Erikson's eight stages of the life cycle were used as a theoretical framework in determining the answer to the research topic. Specifically, Erikson's last three stages of psychosocial development (Intimacy, Generativity, and Ego-Integrity) were investigated.

Littleton's (1994) research sought to determine if there were significant differences in the development of Black doctoral students with regard to Erikson's last three stages of the life cycle and if interaction effects were relevant regarding the doctoral students' gender, age, marital status, and enrollment status. Littleton's (1994) research sample consisted of 96 African-American doctoral students enrolled at eight Historically Black Universities

(HBUs). The study survey was completed by (48 male and 48 female) doctoral students.

Results of Littleton's (1994) study failed to confirm that a significant difference exists among age, gender, enrollment and marital status independently, as well as combined regarding the resolution of Erikson's psychosocial stages of Intimacy and Ego-Integrity. Additionally, these four aforementioned variables independently were found to be nonsignificant with regard to Generativity. These findings were consistent with those revealed in a study by Clayton (1975). Clayton posited that Erikson's Ego-Integrity task of psychosocial development was rarely achieved. Those results were also supported in Messina's (1984) study. The findings in Messina's study failed to report any level of significance in relation to the resolution of the Ego-Integrity task of psychosocial development.

However, a level of significance was found regarding the doctoral students' resolution of the Generativity task with respect to gender, marital status, and enrollment status in the study. Further data analysis revealed that male married part-time, male nonmarried full-time, and male and female married full-time doctoral students showed a more favorable perception than male unmarried part-time doctoral students toward resolving the Generativity task of psychosocial development. Neugarten (1973) opined that adults resolve tasks of Generativity when they expand

their time perspectives and the ways in which they deal with major themes of school, work, love, and death.

Specifically, many doctoral students work in full-time capacities and commute to late afternoon or evening classes, thereby, causing conflicts with their outside committments (Cross, 1981 and Schlossberg et al., 1989). Those commitments are of special concern for married doctoral students, who coordinate the responsibilities of child care, financial obligations, family matters, work, and social activities. In essence, doctoral students resolving the Generativity task of psychosocial development must be productive in maintaining their responsibilities of caring for others and creative in balancing those responsibilities to include their own (Erikson, 1963).

No particular age group better matched any designated Eriksonian crisis than other age groups. Domino and Hannah (1989) revealed that problems existed concerning the use of chronological age as a way of defining life stages. Gruen (1964) found that age was not significantly related to the resolution of Generativity and Ego-Integrity tasks of psychosocial devleopment. Further, Messina's (1984) research findings indicated that age and sex were not related to the resolution of the tasks of Intimacy, Generativity, and Ego-Integrity. Peck (1968) concluded that chronological age was not a valid predictor of the kinds of challenges an adult faces. All of the aforementioned findings were favorable to those of the present study.

Other important findings of Littleton's (1994) study were those surrounding the combination effects of the variables: gender, age, and marital status with regard to Generativity. Even though a significance was not achieved, there was a marked tendency toward significance with regard to these variables. One reasonable explanation, based on the work of Erikson, might be that adults resolving the Generativity tasks of development are consumed with providing for their family and the next generation. Generativity is seen as a period of productivity and creativity. In essence, middle age is envisioned as a vital period for accomplishing one's life goals and objectives. Failure to do so may result in stagnation and despair. The social institutions of adult life, including: marriage, parenthood, school, and work, reinforce Generativity and guarantee Generativity resolution (Erikson, 1963). Based on the major findings of this study, which represent a new interpretation of Erikson's developmental theory, the data seem to suggest that behavior in the nontraditional Black doctoral students' psychosocial development was not significantly related to Erikson's last three phases of development.

Summary

Many "traditional" theories failed to define factors that promoted the minority adult students' overall psychosocial development. Most traditional theorists presumed that all adult students experienced developmental tasks

in a similar manner. Many adult development theories failed to acknowledge the culture-race aspects of development (Fleming, 1984; Wright, 1987; and Gilson, 1990). As a result, culture, sex, and class may prove questionable in evaluating minorities' developmental processes (Wright, 1987; Gavin, 1989; and Cheatham and Slaney, 1990; and McEwen, Roper, Gryant and Langa, 1990).

In an attempt to conceptualize theories that were pertinent to the psychosocial development of culturally diverse adults, various theorists have proposed nontraditional theories of development. Gooden (1980), Murray (1982), Branch-Simpson (1985), Clay (1985), Jeffries (1985), Ruffin (1985), Bowman (1989), Herbert (1989), Simmons (1990), Harris (1992), McCrawley and Freeman (1993), Littleton (1994), and Jones (1996) have developed alternative theories to address the issues of development among African-American adults. However, a substantial amount of research remains unaddressed regarding the African-American adult's development.

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